



## ***News Release***

***Communications New Brunswick***

### **N.B. Human Rights Commission**

## **Statement / Disability Awareness Week (05/05/26)**

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May 26, 2005

FREDERICTON (CNB) - New Brunswick Human Rights Commission Chair Dr. Gordon Porter issued this statement to mark Disability Awareness Week:

"Disability Awareness Week starts on May 30 this year, and its theme is 'Put our abilities to work for you!'

"The barriers faced by people with disabilities are not only physical, such as steps that block access to people in wheelchairs. They also include attitudes, such as stereotypes about what people can do safely and effectively, and policies developed without considering their impact on persons with disabilities.

"The Human Rights Commission is working to help reduce these barriers through its educational activities, as well as by investigating and mediating complaints of discrimination. Complaints based on disability are the most common complaints that we receive; they constitute nearly 40 per cent of our caseload.

"Our message is that people are not meeting their legal obligations when they treat everybody exactly the same if the end result is that persons with disabilities are excluded or disadvantaged.

"There is a legal obligation to accommodate people with a disability. This means that employers, service providers and landlords must be flexible so as to eliminate the discriminatory effect of uniform policies, practices and facilities on people with a disability.

"For example, employers may need to modify job duties or provide specialized equipment so that an employee with a disability can stay on the job or return to work. However, they do not need to undergo undue hardship or sacrifice their legitimate objectives in order to accommodate.

"It is important to note that accommodation is not just a legal responsibility; it also makes good business sense. Studies have shown that accommodating people with disabilities benefits businesses through reduced turnover, recruitment and training costs, improved morale and an expanded recruitment pool. Most employers find accommodation is easy and not expensive.

"The big picture is that people with disabilities have a lot to contribute to business and to society in general, and we cannot afford to let their contribution go to waste.

"Last year, the commission published a guideline to help employers understand their legal obligations to

accommodate people with a disability. It can be found at: <http://www.gnb.ca/hrc-cdp/e/Guideline-on-Accommodating-Disability-at-Work.pdf>.

"During this special week, I invite New Brunswickers to consider what we can do to remove the barriers that people with disabilities face so that they can 'put their abilities to work.'"

05/05/26

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